THE THICK OF IT

EPISODE 2
Draft 7
(SHOOTING SCRIPT)
01 February 2005

230 **INT. ABBOT'S OFFICE.** **DAY 4**

ABBOT AND TUCKER ARE WATCHING THE ZEITGEIST TAPE. ABBOT HAS JUST ABOUT NODDED OFF.

WE DISTINCTLY HEAR MARY'S VOICE. ABBOT STARTS AWAKE AND REACTS.

HUGH ABBOT
Shit.

MALCOLM TUCKER
I know. But people watch it. This gets six million.

HUGH ABBOT
Oh shit.

MALCOLM TUCKER
What?

ABBOT HESITATES.

MALCOLM TUCKER
What is it?

HUGH GETS UP.

HUGH ABBOT
Nothing. Could you just…? I just need to…Maybe pause there. I'll be back in a sec.

HUGH GOES INTO **INT. GLENN'S OFFICE**.

HE WHISPERS TO GLENN.

HUGH ABBOT
Glenn, we've got a bit of a problem. You remember Mary, from the focus group?

GLENN CULLEN
Mrs Perfect.

HUGH ABBOT
She's an actress.

GLENN CULLEN
What do you mean?

HUGH ABBOT
I mean…no, that's the clearest way of saying it: she's an actress.

GLENN CULLEN
Are you sure?

HUGH ABBOT
Yes. I've just seen her. She's in the fucking *Bill*.

GLENN CULLEN
Okay. Right. So…right. This doesn't have to be a problem.

GLENN AND HUGH MOVE THROUGH INTO **INT. TERRI'S OFFICE**.

HUGH ABBOT
I think it does. It means she wasn't for real. She's not a stay-at-home, middle-England mum. She was obviously just playing a part. What she said wasn't…you know…

TERRI COVERLEY
What who said wasn't what?

HUGH ABBOT
We're organizing focus groups to listen to what ordinary people think, only they're not ordinary people. They're actually actors and not technically people at all.

GLENN, HUGH AND TERRI MOVE THROUGH INTO OLLY'S AREA – **INT. CORRIDOR**

GLENN CULLEN (TO OLLY)
Your focus group legend – she's an actress.

OLLY REEDER
What?

GLENN CULLEN (TO HUGH)
Look, Hugh, these focus group people use actors all the time. You tell them you need 'x' number of punters pronto, and if they can't cobble together a proper cross-section they call up a casting agency – you know, "Send me three liberals, two mavericks and a racist." No-one loses.

HUGH ABBOT
But we based everything on her – just on her. Alone. What if Hewitt's onto this? Shit.

HUGH'S IN A PANIC. HE GOES DOWN THE CORRIDOR AND INTO **INT. SMALL STORE ROOM**

HUGH ABBOT
Fuck.

THERE'S A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. HUGH ANSWERS IT. IT'S TUCKER. HE KNOWS.

MALCOLM TUCKER
You said 'she'.

HUGH ABBOT
Yes.

MALCOLM TUCKER
Come out of the cupboard Hugh.

HUGH ABBOT
No.

MALCOLM TUCKER
Hugh, we need to sort this out.

HUGH AND TUCKER GO BACK INTO THE CORRIDOR TO JOIN TERRI, GLENN AND OLLY.

MALCOLM TUCKER
Okay, this 'Mary' knows we based everything on her, yeah? On her lying to us – playing a role.

HUGH ABBOT
And do you think Hewitt knows?

TUCKER
Of course he fucking knows. She's his mole. That's why he's got a piece about focus groups out tomorrow. We've got no choice. We have to leak this story to Angela Heaney now. Damage limitation. Present the version we want to get out before Hewitt mauls us with his in the morning.

THERE'S A MASS DISCUSSION/ROW IN THE CORRIDOR.

MALCOLM TUCKER COULD SAY:

- Get her in, get the actress in, we need to get her on board.
- Terri, get onto Heaney and her editor, get our version of this out there tonight.
- We need to sort this now, Hugh. You're fucking damaged. You're like a damaged…vase.

HUGH ABBOT COULD SAY:

- (POINTING AT OLLY) We've all agreed. It was his fault. It's Olly's fault.
- We need to get Mary in. I'll talk to her. I'm very good with people.
- How was I to know she was an actress? I don't watch TV.
- Vase?

TERRI COVERLEY COULD SAY:

- Why are we shouting?
- I'll ring Angela now. We're in time for the first editions.
- I thought I recognised her. She was in *Midsomer Murders* or *Judge John Deed* or something.

GLENN CULLEN COULD SAY:

- We're not shouting!
- Calm down everyone. We have to be calm. Calm the fuck down.
- Our trust was abused. That's the line. We're abuse victims.

OLLY REEDER COULD SAY:

- Stop saying 'calm down'!
- How is this my fault? How was I to know? I was lied to by the agency.
- I'll call Mary. I'll get her in tonight. She'll do it. I think she fancies me.

THE DISCUSSION ENDS WITH HUGH.

HUGH ABBOT
Look, look, we'll get Mary in and she'll see that we're all really nice people and come round to our point of view, and it'll be fine.

OLLY REEDER
Or we kill her.

CUT TO: